DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 116 260 CS 501 208

AUTHOR	Pietila, Veikko
TITLE	Alienation and Use of the Mass Media.
PUB DATE	70
NOTE	17p.; Reprinted form "Acta Sociologica" Vol. 13, 1970
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS	*Audiences; *Content Analysis; Higher Education; *Information Dissemination; *Mass Media; Media Research; Newspapers; Radio; Television Viewing
IDENTIFIERS	*Alienation

ABSTRACT

Several studies in media viewing have examined the hypothesis that alienation correlates with the consumption of escape-type content from the mass media. In order to interpret this result, alienation was considered as a process beginning with difficiulties in situation definitions. It was assumed in this study that heavy information of the mass media offers such definitions. In the beginning of the alienation process people thus feel difficulties in defining the situations and assumedly react in such a situation compensatively, with heightened intake of heavy information. If this does not help in defining situations, a second reaction, restriction of or withdrawal from heavy information is plausible. Some results supported this interpretation, but there were conflicting results, too. (Author/RB)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED116260

Reprinted from Acta sociologica vol. 13 (1970) No. 4, 237—252

Alienation and Use of the Mass Media*

VEIKKO PIETILÄ

University of Tampere, Finland

A general assumption is that alienation correlates with consumption of escape-type content from the mass media. In the study reported here this was not observed. In order to interpret this result alienation was considered as a process beginning with difficulties in situation definitions. Assumedly the 'heavy' information of the mass media offers such definitions. In the beginning of the alienation process people thus feel difficulties in defining the situations and assumedly react in such a situation compensatively, with heightened intake of 'heavy' information. If this does not help in defining the situations, a second reaction, restriction of or withdrawal from 'heavy' information is plausible. Some results supported this interpretation, but there were conflicting results, too.

Theoretical Background

In their study, "Alienation and Uses of the Mass Media", McLeod, Ward and Tancill claim that audience research in mass communication is entering upon a new phase.[1] Earlier research, according to these authors, was interested primarily in such factors as the amount of time devoted by people to the various media, or the type of content chosen by them (content is considered here in terms of formal subject-matter categories, such as for instance "local news" or "sports" in a study of newspaper readership). The analysis was often rather unimaginative, since the respondents were normally compared in terms of such conventional demographic variables as sex, age, education, etc. The results of such research generally consisted of uninteresting and trivial information.[2]

Similarly, the study e.g. of the functions of the mass media, according to the same authors, has contented itself with listing various functions, without attempting to anchor these functions in the social environment of the individual or in his personality structure.[3] On the other hand, research into the use of the mass media by children and young people has often been theoretically more interesting. Such research has not remained at the level of conventional demographic factors, but has also taken into account such factors as the relationship between children and parents,[4] the relationship between young people and their peer group,[5] etc. Actually, the "new look" in mass communication audience research mentioned by McLeod, Ward and Tancill means that the focus has shifted from the earlier aim of *describing* what people use which media and what kind of content they seek out,

* Reprinted and translated from the Finnish *Joukkotiedotus ja yleisö* (Mass Communication and the Public), Ed. by K. Nordenstreng (Tapiola: Weilin & Göös, 1969), pp. 199—223.

CS 501 208

to *explaining* on the basis of some sociological or social-psychological theories *why* given individuals use particular media or seek out particular kinds of media content. It is perhaps more accurate to say that nowadays we aim at *specifying the conditions* under which particular media or types of content are selected.

One such specifying factor, the influence of which on mass media use has been studied to a certain extent, is alienation. In the following, we attempt to analyze the relation between alienation and mass media use in the light of some Finnish studies. First, however, we consider briefly the concept of alienation itself, and review some research results and theoretical generalizations from American studies touching on the problem.

The concept of alienation here refers to a state of the *individual*. In this sense it is used, e.g. by Allardt,[6] in order to distinguish it from *anomie*, which refers to a state of a society or social group. The concept of alienation as an individual state is a complex one; it is defined as including several partial components, among which positive correlations are assumed to hold. (Some empirical studies have shown this to be the case, although the correlations may be relatively low.)[7]

According to Melvin Seeman,[8] the concept of alienation includes five components: powerlessness over the environment, meaninglessness of life's alternatives, normlessness of individual conduct, isolation from cultural and social institutions, and self-estrangement from one's own role. The attitude scale designed to measure alienation which is perhaps best known, Srole's *anomie* scale, likewise includes items concerning several components of alienation.[9] Dean has developed scales for the following components of alienation: powerlessness, normlessness and social isolation.[10]

Although such an analysis has in fact made more precise the concept of alienation itself, writers are far from unanimous as to the content of the various components. For example, Seeman's component of powerlessness is based, according to Allardt, on Marx's ideas about alienation, but — again following Allardt — Seeman does not mean by this the feeling of powerlessness and the discontent stemming from this feeling as such, but rather a more diffuse and vague feeling of helplessness.[11] Furthermore, for example, Dean considers that the concept of powerlessness may include, in addition to an actual experience of lack of power (due to economic or political circumstances), also an experience of helplessness due to some other cause.[12]

In this connection, Dean refers to Kris and Leites' conception[13] of the increasing complexity of transactions in society, which may lead to a situation in which ever fewer individuals are able to understand these transactions. Kris and Leites find, for example, that "individuals in the mass societies of the twentieth century are to an ever-increasing extent involved in public affairs; it becomes increasingly difficult to ignore them. But 'ordinary' individuals have ever less the feeling that they can *understand* or *influence* the very events upon which their life and happiness is known to depend."[14] Among other writers, Fromm considers the mass media to be a partial contributing factor in such development.[15]

The concept of alienation is important in mass media research precisely because the so-called "information explosion" may indeed be one factor contributing to a feeling of alienation. The amount of information available is so enormous that it may be difficult to form a crystallized and articulate conception of events and their causes; under such conditions the individual may easily feel helplessly caught up in the train of events.

For example, the study by Cantril, Gaudet and Herzog[16] of the panic caused by the broadcast of Orson Welles' "War of the Worlds" indicated that many people were immediately able to believe that the Martians had really attacked the Earth. The study showed that these credulous individuals experienced the world as in some way insecure and unpredictable, a place in which anything can happen. The significance of the mass media is well reflected in the following interview response: "Being we are in a troublesome world,

anything is liable to happen. We hear *so much news every day* — so many things we hear are unbelievable."[17]

In research concerning the relation between alienation and use of the mass media, practically no attention has been paid to this aspect of the problem. This is probably due above all to the fact that the component of social isolation has been selected out for emphasis; sometimes, on the other hand, the relation between alienation and mass media use has been studied without any closer analysis of the concept of alienation. These studies have indicated, for instance, that socially isolated individuals tend to seek out escape-type programs more than those who are not socially isolated.[18]

McLeod, Ward and Tancill approached alienation in a more general sense and observed, for example, that alienated individuals used the "fantasy-oriented" electronic media (radio and television) more, and the primarily "information-oriented" printed media (especially periodicals and books) less than non-alienated individuals.[19] They further found that non-alienated individuals were more likely than alienated ones to read news items in the papers whose headlines did not promise any sensation; there were no differences observable between the two groups as to the reading of sensationally headlined articles. Thirdly, they found that alienated persons were more likely than non-alienated ones to use newspapers for vicarious, escape-type purposes and less for informational purposes.

In general, then, it has been found that alienated individuals tend more than non-alienated ones to seek out fantasy or escape, either by using more fantasy-oriented media or by selecting that type of content within a given medium. These results have been interpreted, for example, by pointing out that escape material can compensate for unsatisfactory social contacts on the level of imagination.[20] It has also been thought — parallel with the preceding — that alienated persons seek out material which corresponds to their picture of a hostile and unpredictable world, such as news items about accidents and violence.[21] Such articles are considered to offer a more immediate reward than, for instance, items concerning economic life or politics.[22]

All in all, these conclusions agree with the theory according to which states including elements of alienation favor expressive forms of behavior, while instrumental behavior is restricted.[23] In the following analysis of the relations between alienation and use of the mass media, we shall take the findings described above as our working hypotheses.

Alienation and Use of the Mass Media

Let us first examine the relationship between alienation and the extent to which a particular medium is used. The analysis is based on the data of the 1965 basic study by the Finnish Broadcasting Company.[24] In this study, alienation was measured by means of attitude statements, concerned mainly with the degree to which radio and TV information was felt to be unreliable or self-contradictory (the problem of confidence; the items were in a sense related to the statement on Srole's scale that 'people in general can't be trusted'), and with the extent to which the mass media were felt to be alien to the problems of the ordinary man. On the basis of these items a Guttman-type scale was constructed. Its coefficient of reproducibility was .96. The scale probably measures the component of helplessness or powerlessness.

It was found that the correlations between this scale and the variables measuring extent of media use did not deviate significantly from zero; in other words, the use of the mass media seems to be rather independent of alienation. Thus the results of McLeod, Ward and Tancill are not supported by this study. It might also be expected that, since the scale measured primarily lack of confidence in the media (particularly radio and television), those who agreed with the statements would use these media less than those who disagreed with them. But this assumption was also found to be unjustified.

In a newspaper readership study [25], alienation was measured by means of Srole's scale; the statements used were in a more extreme form than usual. The final Guttman scale omitted Srole's fifth statement, which here was formulated somewhat differently from that of Srole, and which was only weakly correlated with the other items. The coefficient of reproducibility of the four-item scale was .93. In this study again the scale was not correlated with time spent on media use.

This latter study also permitted an analysis of the relationship between alienation and the kind of material selected within each medium (local newspaper, radio, television.) The respondents were presented with twenty different areas of newspaper content, and were asked to rate along a seven-point scale how much they read items in the local paper belonging to each category. In the same way they were presented with the titles of seven television series and eight radio series (programs which are broadcast under the same title at regular time intervals), and were asked to evaluate how regularly they followed each program. The correlations between alienation and these figures were also generally quite low.

Thus, on the basis of these data, both the amount of time spent on the mass media and the content areas selected seem to be rather unrelated to alienation. The results of the American studies mentioned above do not seem to be valid for Finnish society. On the other hand, as will appear below, there are some relationships observable between alienation and, for example, selection of content type under various conditions.

Alienation and Reasons for Media Use

We have referred above to the hypothesis of McLeod, Ward and Tancill, that the more alienated an individual is, the more likely he is to use the mass media for purposes of escape and the less for informational purposes. In the newspaper readership study described above, the same assumption was again made. For instance the reasons for use of the media were selected on the basis of the McLeod, Ward and Tancill study. On the basis of the factorization of these reasons for use, two scales were prepared for each medium: one based on the two variables with the highest loading on the first factor (the scale of *vicarious* or *escape gratification*), and the other based on the two variables with the highest loading on the second factor (the scale of *informational gratification*). No scale was constructed for the third factor, primarily because this factor differed somewhat for each medium. All the scales were of the sum-type.

Here again the correlations between alienation and reasons for use of the mass media were relatively low, as shown by Table 1.

Table 1. *Correlations Between Alienation and Sum-Scales Measuring Reasons for Use of Different Media*

	Alienation
Local newspaper (N = 296)	
scale of informational gratification	—.08
scale of vicarious gratification	.11
Other newspapers (N = 242)	
scale of informational gratification	—.19
scale of vicarious gratification	.04
Television (N = 242)	
scale of informational gratification	—.09
scale of vicarious gratification	.02
Radio (N = 294)	
scale of informational gratification	—.06
scale of vicarious gratification	.03

While the correlations are relatively low, the relationships between alienation and gratification scales are consistent as to direction for each medium. On the basis of this consistency, it could be claimed that these results yield at least some support for those of McLeod, Ward and Tancill. In other words, *alienated individuals use each medium for vicarious reasons more than non-alienated, who in turn use the media more for informational reasons.*

Let us now return to the problem of the relation between alienation and choice of content. It was observed above that choice of content, whether in newspapers, radio or TV, does not seem to be dependent on alienation. Now this may be due to nonvalidity either of the alienation scale or of our content-category questions. According to earlier research, alienation should be correlated e.g. negatively with reading informational material in the newspapers and positively with reading escape-type material. However, it is possible that at least in the case of newspapers it is not possible to distinguish between these two types of content. Such a formal division may not correspond at all to the way in which people read such material, the reasons for which they read it and the gratification they derive from it. Only after we really know people's reasons for choosing a medium and its content can we say something definite about this. We tried, however, to go into this problem in a brief study, which indicated that the conception of the instrumental nature of content like "editorials", "interpretive writings", etc., and the expressive nature of content like "comics", "sports", etc., seems to be theoretically valid.[26]

On the other hand, it is possible that the alienation measured by Srole's scale is as such non-valid from the point of view of the present problem. If, for example, we consider that alienation is not a permanent state but rather a process which varies according to circumstances, then it is possible that the individual will behave differently in various stages of this process.[27] Allardt, for example, considers that the various components of alienation can be, at least in theory, arranged in the form of a cumulative scale according to the issue (situationed definitions, role expectations, norms and values) which is causing uncertainty.[28] In which of these areas can the mass media contribute to uncertainty? In our opinion this is most often the case with *situation definition:* difficulties in this area bring about the mildest form of alienation, *temporary alienation.*[29]

It is also possible to assume that the shift from a state of non-alienation to one of temporary alienation is a process as well, and that in this process the object of the individual is to regain the original non-alienated state. In other words, when an individual feels that temporarily or for a longer period he is unable to accept the situation definitions offered him by the mass media, he tries — at least in the beginning — to *compensate* by reading more about the issue or topic in question. If he experiences failure in this adaptation reaction, he may substitute for it another one; he then reacts by rejecting the material which causes him frustration, or at least by restricting the reading of such material. This we call a reaction of *withdrawal.*

In other words, the zero correlation observed between alienation and e.g. the reading of informational material may be due to the fact that the relation between these variables is a non-linear one. If alienation is interpreted as a process, then at a particular stage of that process the individual may read even more such material than in a non-alienated stage. But how to study such a process by means of a cross-sectional sample? It can be approached only indirectly: we can assume, for example, that if an individual is alienated but nevertheless uses the mass media for informational puposes, he has not yet gone beyond the compensatory adaptation reaction. We might further assume that alienated individuals who read, for instance, the local press for purposes of information, read even more informative material than non-alienated individuals who read it for the same purpose. Among those who read the papers for non-informational purposes, the corresponding relation between alienated and non-alienated individuals can be assumed to be the reverse.

It was in fact found that, among those who read the local paper for informational more than for vicarious reasons, those individuals who were classified as alienated read "delayed-reward" material such as "foreign news", "national news" and "editorials" significantly more often than did non-alienated persons. The alienated members of this group also read "articles on the editorial page" more than the others. Of the material offering an immediate reward, only "crime and accident reports" were read more often by alienated than by non-alienated individuals.

Among those who read the local newspaper more for vicarious than for informational reasons, those classified as alienated read such delayed-reward informational material as "national news" or "interpretive writings" more than did the non-alienated. With regard to other content areas, the groups did not differ noticeably.

A similar analysis carried out with corresponding groups as to regularity in following television programs indicated that, of those who watched television more for informational than for vicorous reasons, alienated individuals followed news programs significantly more regularly than non-alienated. The only other program showing a significant difference was the "Danny Kaye Show"; this was watched more regularly by alienated than by non-alienated viewers. Among those who watched television more for vicarious than for informational reasons, there were no significant differences for any program between alienated and non-alienated.

Similarly, within the group listening to the radio for purposes of information more than for escape, alienated individuals listened to significantly more news broadcasts during the day than non-alienated. There were no differences between the groups for any other program.

This analysis, then, in general indicates that alienated individuals considered themselves to use the various media (local newspaper, other paper, television and radio) more for vicarious reasons than did the non-alienated, who on the contrary considered themselves to use these media more for informational purposes. In view of the consistency of these results, they can be considered to lend at least some support to the observations of McLeod, Ward and Tancill. On the other hand, in those cases where alienated individuals read e.g. the local paper more for informational than for vicarious reasons, they generally read more *delayed reward informational material* than did non-alienated individuals of the same group. Under these conditions the use of the mass media by alienated persons turns out to be contrary to that predictable on the basis of the American studies. Similarly, when alienated individuals do use the radio or television more for informational than for vicarious reasons, they tend to follow *news and current events programs* more regularly than non-alienated individuals of the same group. This result is consistent with the preceding one, and thus in conflict with the claim that alienated persons seek out escape-type material more often than non-alienated ones.

In other words, *in cases when alienation occurs, but the response to the situation is a compensatory one* (media are used more for informational than for vicarious reasons), delayed reward material (especially news and current events material) is sought out more often than otherwise. The reading or following of the material in such a situation may be ritualistic, i.e. the forms of behavior may have remained after the actual goal of communication (in this case, receiving a definition of the situation) has been obscured.[30] Actually, it is difficult to say whether the increased consumption of informational material in this situation represents a more formal survival, an active attempt to reconstruct one's picture of the world, or a hopeless pursuit of runaway events.

On the other hand, *in cases where alienation occurs and the adaptive response is one of withdrawal* (media are used more for escape than for purposes of obtaining information), *there is neither a decrease in the consumption of delayed-reward informational material nor an increase*

in the consumption of noninformational material. These results cannot be accounted for by the elementary theory presented above. In general, the interpretations suggested here should be considered as totally unproven hypotheses.

Alienation and the Meaning of the Mass Media

It might be thought that for those who try to compensate for their feeling of helplessness e.g. by increased reading, the mass media would be more important and more vital than for others. During the strike of the technical staff of the Finnish Broadcasting Company in the spring of 1966, and during the printers' strike in the spring of 1967, an opportunity offered itself to study the difficulties which the unavailability of the media caused to the people. During the Boadcasting Company strike television did not function at all, and radio functioned at half capacity, broadcasting only music and news programs. We will call this strike the television strike. Similarly, the printers' strike broke off regular publication of newspapers and magazines for a little under one month; we will call this the newspaper strike.

During these strikes, a number of telephone interviews were carried out. The respondents were selected from among the group which had participated in the interviews of the 1965 basic research study of the Finnish Broadcasting Company in the towns of Turku, Hyvinkää, Mänttä, and Ikaalinen and in the rural community of Sauvo. Since all the respondents had a telephone, they cannot be considered representative of the entire population of the country. These strike interview data are described in greater detail elsewhere.[31]

Among other questions, the respondents in these interviews were asked how they felt about it when the television was not working or the newspapers did not come out, what they considered to be the most unpleasant aspects of the strike, and whether they considered the strike to have any positive aspects. The questions were open-ended, and they were classified afterwards according to the responses. On the basis of the above three questions, for each strike a so-called strike-resentment scale was constructed, which was assumed to measure annoyance or difficulties caused by the unavailability of the media during the strike. The split-half reliability coefficient obtained for the television strike scale was .53, that for the newspaper strike .65.

First of all, which group is more annoyed by the unavailability of the media, the alienated or the non-alienated? If, as assumed by McLeod, Ward and Tancill, the media represent for alienated persons a kind of substitute for social contact, then they should be more affected by the medium's unavailability than non-alienated individuals. If, on the other hand, the media bring conflict into a situation for alienated persons on account of their nonreliability, then these persons should undoubtedly experience relief in being freed from this conflict situation. The results obtained here were fairly consistent with those described above in connection with the relation between alienation and time spent using the mass media: the correlations between alienation and the strike resentment scales were close to zero (.03 for the television strike data and —.02 for the newspaper strike data).

The analysis was then extended on the basis of the same assumptions as above: i.e. we assumed that when an individual is alienated but tries to adapt to the situation by compensation, the mass media will be more important than otherwise. Correspondingly, when an alienated individual reacts by withdrawal (i.e. avoids news and current events information), the mass media will be less important than otherwise. These adaptation reactions could here be approached only indirectly, as expressed by a *news activity scale* measured in the 1965 basic interviews. (The alienation scale was also constructed on the basis of this same interview.) Thus it was assumed that if an alienated individual shows news activity (considers radio and television news broadcasts to be good programs and reads national newspapers),

he is reacting compensatingly, while an alienated individual who does not show such activity is reacting withdrawingly. If the mass media were more important for compensatingly reacting individuals and correspondingly less important for those reacting by withdrawal than for others, then alienation should be positively correlated with strike resentment in the group of news-active individuals and negatively correlated in the news-passive group. The results of this analysis are shown in the upper part of Table 2.

As the table indicates, correlations consistent with these assumptions were apparent in the newspaper strike data, but for the television strike, keeping news activity constant did not in any way affect the original zero correlation. This result is, however, understandable; television is not nearly as pure a news medium as the newspapers. It is undoubtedly just because the newspapers are so purely a news medium that they are *more important for compensatingly reacting alienated individuals* than for non-alienated news-active individuals. This is consistent with the finding that compensatingly reacting alienated persons read more delayed reward news items than do non-alienated persons among those reading the newspapers for informational reasons. On the other hand, we observe that the newspapers are less important for withdrawingly adapting alienated individuals than for non-alienated individuals who are merely indifferent to the news. This can be interpreted to mean that a withdrawingly reacting individual no longer attempts to keep up with events, so that the medium is not important for him.

Table 2. *Correlations (r) Between Alienation and Strike Resentment Scales for Newspaper and Television Strike Data, as a Whole and Keeping News-Activity Constant (Upper Part), and Correlations Between News-Activity and Strike Resentment Scales Both as a Whole and Keeping Alienation Constant (Lower Part).*

	Television Strike		Newspaper Strike	
	N	r	N	r
Alienation and strike resentment				
in the whole material	122	.03	119	—.02
within news-active group	50	.02	44	.25
within news-passive group	72	.03	75	—.14
News-activity and strike resentment				
in the whole material	122	—.14	119	.05
within alienated group	65	—.14	67	.24
within non-alienated group	57	—.13	52	—.20

After that, the analysis was reversed, and alienation was held constant while the correlations between news activity and strike resentment were calculated separately for the alienated and non-alienated groups. These correlations are shown in the lower part of Table 2. Holding alienation constant does not in any way affect the original slight negative correlation in the case of the television strike. On the other hand, the original very slight correlation in the case of the newspaper strike becomes more clearly defined: in the alienated group, news activity is positively correlated with strike resentment, while in the non-alienated group the correlation is negative; in other words, in the non-alienated group news-passive individuals are more annoyed by the strike than news-active ones.

What is the reason for such a relation between news-activity and strike resentment in the non-alienated group? We might have expected news activity in general to correlate positively with strike resentment, especially in the case of the newspaper strike. As has been remarked, newspapers are more purely a news medium than for example radio or television. One explanation may be that non-alienated news-active individuals behave rationally

in their use of the mass media; the media have only instrumental value for them. The only important thing for them is that they be able to obtain the necessary news or information, and the source is irrelevant. During the newspaper strike, each of the respondents possessed a television set as well as a radio. In other words, the respondents were able to *substitute* for the lack of newspapers by means of radio or television news. Evidently the relatively slight resentment among non-alienated news-active readers was due precisely to the fact that *they had substituted for the absence of newspapers by means of other media*. But why is the same phenomenon not evident among alienated news-active individuals? According to the theory outlined above, we would not expect this to be so, since individuals who are reacting by compensation need as great an amount of information as possible. Under these conditions, the elimination even of a single source of information is experienced as detrimental. This is one way of accounting for the relations observed.

Using this possibility as a starting point, we can now analyze the television strike data further. There may be some compensation factor concealed behind the lack of correlation between alienation and strike resentment during the television strike. On the other hand, it was difficult to hold substitution possibilities constant, since during the television strike only one respondent did not subscribe to any newspaper, and all owned a radio. We assumed that the more papers a respondent subscribed to, the *better* he was able to substitute for the absence of television. Thus it is not a question of whether or not television could be substituted for, but of how well this could be done. On the basis of the results obtained above, we can expect that among those who subscribe to more than one paper, the non-alienated will be less irritated by the strike than the alienated, while among those who subscribe to only one paper, the opposite relation will hold. These assumptions can be made clear by means of the following four-fold table:

	alienated	non-alienated
subscribers to only one newspaper	poor possibilities of substitution; but subscription to only one paper in this group may reflect a *reaction of withdrawal*, so that the need for information is small and strike resentment is not great	poor possibilities of substitution; the strike causes resentment
subscribers to more than one newspaper	possibilities of substitution are good; but subscription to a number of papers in this group may reflect a *reaction by compensation*, so that the need for information is great and the strike has caused resentment	possibilities of substitution are good, and the strike has not caused much resentment

We are assuming, then, that as substitution opportunities improve, the strike causes less resentment. We also take into consideration, however, the fact that a low level of newspaper subscription among alienated individuals may reflect adaptation by withdrawal, while a high subscription level indicates compensatory adaptation, so that the relation between substitution possibilities and strike resentment *in the alienated group may be the opposite*.

Let us mention, incidentally, that the correlation between newspaper subscription level and strike resentment during the TV strike is .10. This is a mild correlation, indicating however that a high level of subscription *was not* sufficient to substitute for the lack of television.

The means of the strike resentment scale for the groups determined by the above four-fold table are given in Table 3.

Table 3. *Mean Values (M) of Strike Resentment Scale for Television Strike Material in Groups According to Alienation, Holding Newspaper Subscription Level Constant*

	Alienated		Non-Alinated	
	N	M	N	M
Subscribers to only one paper	26	3.00	19	3.59
Subscribers to more than one paper	39	3.87	38	3.29

The results support our assumptions: among those who subscribe to only one newspaper (poor substitution possibilities), the relation between alienation and strike resentment is negative, while among those subscribing to a number of newspapers (possibilities of substitution are good) the relation is positive. Or, if we compare the relation between level of subscription and strike resentment in groups according to alienation, we find that the more newspapers subscribed to, the more resentment is felt in the alienated group, while in the non-alienated group the relation is the opposite. This again lends support to our hypothesis that non-alienated individuals behave rationally in their use of the mass media.

Already in our discussion of the newspaper strike, we observed that within the news-active group, alienation was positively correlated with strike resentment, while in the news-passive group it was negatively correlated. In the television strike data no relation was found to exist between these variables in either group. However, if we take into consideration the newspaper subscription structure, we find the following: when the subscription level is high, there is a positive correlation between alienation and strike resentment in the news-active group; when only one paper is subscribed to, the corresponding correlation is negative. On the other hand, the same relations prevail also in the news-passive group. Nevertheless, television is *more important to compensatingly reacting alienated individuals* (as measured by news activity) than to non-alienated news-active individuals, under conditions when possibilities of replacing the lacking medium are good. When replacement possibilities are bad, the opposite relation prevails. On the other hand, it must be pointed out that television is also more important for alienated individuals who have reacted by withdrawing (as indicated by news-passivity) than for non-alienated news-passive individuals, when the newspaper subscription level is high. This finding differs from that obtained for the newspaper strike data. The explanation may lie in the fact that television is more fantasy-oriented than the newspapers; those who have reacted to alienation by withdrawal need television specifically for purposes of escape.

These results can be checked with those from the newspaper readership study, the data for which were collected during June–August 1967, i.e. three to five months after the newspaper strike. In this study, the respondents were asked to recall the spring newspaper strike, and to state how much it had annoyed them. This kind of *post-facto* questioning is, of course, much more liable to mistakes than if it had been carried out at the time, so that the results should be accepted with reservations.

In this case we were fortunate in that the group also included people who lacked either a radio or a television set; of the entire sample of 300, two did not own either. By separating out those who owned only one electronic medium from those who owned both, we can try to hold constant possibilities of substitution for the lacking medium. The means for the question measuring strike resentment (rated along a seven-point scale), according to the groups defined by the four-fold table above, are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. *Mean Values (M) of Strike Resentment Scale for Newspaper Readership Study in Groups According to Alienation, Holding Electronic Media Structure Constant*

	Alienated		Non-Alienated	
	N	M	N	M
Radio alone or TV alone	36	4.72	24	5.29
Both radio and TV	122	4.76	116	4.69

The results correspond fairly closely to those obtained for the corresponding groups in the television strike data (cf. Table 3). In the group possessing only one or the other of the electronic media (substitution possibilities poor), alienated individuals were less bothered by the strike than non-alienated, while in the group possessing both of the electronic media the relation is the opposite; the difference between the two groups, however, is very small. When we compare the relation between the electronic media ownership structure and strike resentment across alienation, we find that there is a clear decrease in strike resentment within the non-alienated group when we shift from owners of only one of the electronic media to those who possess both media. In the alienated group, on the contrary, strike resentment rises slightly. This again confirms our conception of the rational use of the mass media by non-alienated individuals: *the better their possibilities of replacement of the lacking medium* (by some closely related medium), *the less resentment is caused by the strike, evidently because it is possible to substitute easily for the lacking medium. On the other hand, in the alienated group, the better the substitution possibilities the greater the resentment caused by the strike, evidently because the use of many media here reflects a compensating reaction, the use of few media a withdrawing reaction to the feeling of alienation.* It appears that when an individual reacts by withdrawal, he may give up the use of some medium or media completely.

At the beginning of this section, it was assumed that the mas media would be more important for those alienated individuals who follow current events closely (compensatory adaptation) and less important for those who do not follow current events (withdrawal), than for others. The results of the telephone interviews during the newspaper strike confirm this assumption. The same assumption can also be tested on these newspaper readership data. According to the assumption, among those individuals who both claim to read the local paper for informational reasons and also read a great deal of delayed-reward news items, we should find a positive relationship between alienation and strike resentment (i.e. alienated individuals should be more annoyed by the strike than non-alienated ones). Correspondingly, among those who read the local paper for vicarious reasons and who read only little delayed-reward material, the relation between alienation and strike resentment should be negative. The results presented in Table 5, are however *exactly contrary to this assumption.*

Table 5. *Mean Values (M) of Strike Resentment Scale for Newspaper Readership Study According to Alienation, Holding Both Informational Use of Local Newspaper and Reading of Delayed-Reward Material Constant*

Reads Local Newspaper for Informational Purposes	Reads Delayed-Reward Informational Material	Alienated N	Alienated M	Non-Alienated N	Non-Alienated M
Yes	much	41	5.25	43	5.44
	little	17	4.59	18	4.67
No	much	26	4.54	15	4.53
	little	37	4.16	37	3.79

The relation between alienation and strike resentment among those who read the local paper for information and who read a great deal of delayed-reward material is *negative*, and in the converse group *positive*. (Let us mention that this analysis was carried out only for those who owned both of the electronic media; the group of those owning only one of the media was so small that the computations could not be performed.) The differences between the alienated and non-alienated groups here are quite small, but on the other hand the results of the telephone interview material, which support the assumption, are not very conclusive either.

Discussion

The starting point of this study was the assumption, based on the results of certain American studies, that alienated individuals would use electronic media more than non-alienated individuals, who in turn would use printed media more, because the role of the former is more fantasy-oriented, serving escape purposes. We also assumed that alienated persons would seek out escape-type material more than non-alienated. On the basis of two sets of data gathered in Finland, however, it was observed that the scales which (presumably) measured alienation were rather uncorrelated with amount of media use. There was also no correlation between alienation and the type of material followed in newspapers, radio or television. Thus the assumptions derived from American research do not seem to be valid for Finnish society. On the other hand, we observed that alienated individuals are more inclined to use the media for vicarious reasons and non-alienated individuals for informational purposes, a result which is consistent with the observations of McLeod, Ward and Tancill, although the correlations established on the basis of our data are fairly weak.

On the basis of these results, we concluded that perhaps *alienation should be interpreted not as a static and permanent condition, but rather as a process*. Utilizing Allardt's theoretical concepts, such a process may get under way when an individual experiences difficulty in defining situations; for example, when the mass media make available certain definitions, but the individual for one reason or another (e.g. inadequate informational resources) *is not able to internalize these definitions*.[32] Furthermore, once such an alienation process — primarily a feeling of helplessness — gets under way, the individual tries to adapt to the situation in ways which decrease as effectively as possible the tensions due to the situation. We assumed that in the early stages of the alienation process, the individual would still try to keep up with events, to compensate for his feeling of helplessness in the face of events by seeking situational definition through reading or in general by following current events more closely. When this reaction, however, is insufficient, the individual may substitute for it a reaction

of withdrawal: that is, he attempts to limit to a minimum reading or other contact which arouses in him a feeling of helplessness. This withdrawal, of course, does not mean that the individual no longer feels alienated or helpless. These hypothetical relations between the alienation process and the use of the mass media are illustrated in Figure 1.

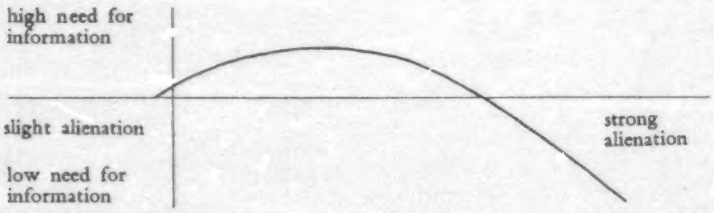

Figure 1. *The Relationship Between the Process of Alienation and Mass Media Behavior*

In this figure, the vertical axis shows the need for information, the horizontal axis alienation. The curve describes adaptive reactions as they are (according to our hypothesis) reflected in mass media behavior. In the early stages of alienation, the need for information increases and the individual accordingly seeks out abundant sources of information. When this does not suffice to fend off the feeling of helplessness, he begins to restrict his consumption of information and the need decreases. The curve may also take the form of an ellipse; when the individual has been successful in restricting his information intake, he may gradually return to his original non-alienated state.

The study of such variables, considered as processes, on the basis of cross-sectional survey-type data is extremely difficult. It is possible, of course, that the scale measuring alienation reflects this process, but the possibility that the process is an elliptical one must also be taken into account. In other words, if we consider a scale of the following type: $----$ (non-alienated), $---+$, $--++$, $-+++$ and $++++$ (extremely alienated), than the class $---+$ (mildly alienated) may include individuals in whom the process of alienation is just getting under way, and who therefore are in the stage of adaptation by compensation, as well as those who have succeeded in restricting their information intake so effectively that their feeling of helplessness has decreased and they are returning to the non-alienated state. Thus point-scores as such are not sufficient to distinguish between individuals in the compensating and in the withdrawing stages of the alienation process.

In order to define these stages, we need other variables. One possibility is that when an individual is alienated, but his use of the media is *more heavily loaded for informational than for vicarious gratification, he is in the stage of compensatory adaptation* (his need for information is great). Similarly, when he shows alienation and *uses the media more for vicarious than for informational purposes, he is in the stage of withdrawal* and his need for information has decreased (he is trying to restrict his information intake). We further assumed that those alienated individuals who use the media more for informational than for vicarious reasons would also read more delayed-reward material than non-alienated persons of the same group — precisely because of their greater need for information. We similarly assumed that alienated persons in the stage of withdrawal, who use the media more for vicarious than for informational reasons, would read less such material than non-alienated members of the same group, precisely because they are trying to restrict the amount of information. The analysis yields support for the former assumption, but not for the latter: in other words, *in the group of those who use the media more for vicarious than for informational reasons, alienated individuals read more delayed-reward material than non-alienated.*

This result can now be explained by applying the hypothesis of the elliptical nature of the process. The process can be assumed to go through the following stages: (1) a non-alienated, "normal" stage (both need and consumption of information are moderate); (2) the initial stage of the alienation process, compensatory adaptation (both need and consumption increase); (3) the turning point in the alienation process, a reaction of withdrawal (an attempt to restrict information intake); and (4) a gradual return to the original "normal" state (the individual has succeeded in restricting his information intake to such a level that he loses the feeling of helplessness). This conception should be treated as a completely unproven hypothesis.

In analyzing the meaning of the mass media for alienated and non-alienated individuals, the theoretical model described above was also utilized. It was assumed that the mass media would be most important for alienated individuals in the compensatory stage of alienation and least important for alienated individuals in the stage of withdrawal. The importance of the media was measured by the amount of resentment caused by the unavailability of the media during media strikes. The data from the newspaper strike telephone interviews did in fact yield correlations supporting this assumption. This is quite a surprising result, when we consider that about a year and a half had elapsed between the measurement of alienation and the measurement of strike resentment. If alienation is interpreted as a process, a year and a half is a long time for measurements to retain their reliability. As for the television strike data, it was observed that when the possibilities of replacement of the lacking medium (here the newspaper subscription structure) were held constant, alienation was positively correlated with strike resentment among those subscribing to several newspapers and negatively for those subscribing to only one newspaper. This was interpreted to mean that the number of newspapers read by alienated individuals reflects their stage of alienation. Corresponding relations were obtained between alienation and strike resentment in the control data relating to newspaper readership study, when ownership of the electronic media was held constant.

But are these results not in conflict with the hypothesis presented above, as to the elliptical nature of the alienation process? Should we not assume, according to that hypothesis, that alienated individuals in the stage of withdrawal (news-passive individuals who use only few media) would be *more resentful* of the strikes than non-alienated individuals? This assumption would be correct, if it were clear that consumption of information and meaning of the media measured the same thing. Let us consider an individual who is at the turning point in the alienation process; his reaction is one of withdrawal, and he is attempting to restrict his information intake. It is at this stage of the process that the greatest amount of conflict-causing pressure is undoubtely felt — at least more than at the point when the attempt to restrict information intake has been successful. It is possible that the strikes have been instrumental in releasing this conflict by reducing the amount of pressure in the situation, and that for this reason alienated individuals in the stage of withdrawal have reacted relatively calmly to the strikes. Interpreted in this way, the results are not in conflict with the elliptical hypothesis.

With both the television strike data and the readership study data, the analysis was continued with the groups standardized for compensation possibilities by examining the relation between alienation and strike resentment in news-active and news-passive groups (television strike data) and in groups reading much or little delayed-reward informational material (readership study). The television strike data showed that, when compensation possibilities were good (subscription to more than one newspaper), there was a postive correlation between alienation and strike resentment in the news-active group. This is consistent with the result obtained from the newspaper strike telephone interview data, and supports our hypothesis. But under the same conditions, alienation was also positively

correlated with strike resentment in the *news-passive group*, which conflicts with our assumptions. This result can of course be interpreted by pointing out the many other functions, besides the informational, that televison fulfills; it is possible that the resentment is caused by these other factors. As has often been pointed out, television is not nearly so pure a news medium as are the newspapers.

The corresponding analysis in the newspaper readership study indicated that in the group of those who read the papers for informational purposes and seek out informational material, *alienation was negatively correlated with strike resentment*. According to our assumption we would have expected the contrary result, so that this is in conflict with the theory. Similarly among those who do not read the newspapers for informational reasons or seek out such material, the relation between alienation and strike resentment was positive, contrary to what we would have expected. Thus this result is also in conflict with the theory. It is possible, of course, that in these data the measurement of strike resentment is not valid or reliable, since it was obtained after the fact. What, then, is the validity of the alienation values in the telephone interview data, in which strike resentment was measured at a considerable interval after the alienation measurement?

Here we encounter the problem, involved in all ad-hoc explanatory survey studies, which I personally find the most difficult: how to deal with empirical measures of process-like theoretical concepts. Such measures cannot be very valid under the best of conditions, not to mention these strike surveys in which different variables are measured at different times. On the other hand, the theoretical constructs of survey studies are more or less elegant fictions, cloud images, which the winds of future research perhaps will destroy.

NOTES

1. J. McLeod, S. Ward and Karen Tancill, "Alienation and Uses of Mass Media", *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 29, 1965, pp. 583—594.
2. Cf. e.g. E. Allardt and Y. Littunen, *Sosiologia* (Sociology) (Porvoo: WSOY, 1961), pp. 317—318, or K. Nordenstreng, "Yleisradion tutkimustoiminta" ("The Research Work of the Finnish Broadcasting Company"), *Psykologia*, 2, 1967, pp. 143—149.
3. Cf. also E. Katz and D. Foulkes, "On the Use of the Mass Media as 'Escape': Clarification of a Concept", *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 26, 1962, pp. 337—388.
4. E.g. H. T. Himmelweit, A. N. Oppenheim and P. Vince, *Television and the Child* (London: The Nuffield Foundation, 1958); W. Schramm, J. Lyle and E. B. Parker, *Television in the Lives of Our Children* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961); P. Clarke, "Parental Socialization Values and Children's Newspaper Reading", *Journalism Quarterly*, 42, 1965, pp. 539—546.
5. M. W. Riley and J. W. Riley, Jr., "A Sociological Approach to Communications Research", in W. Schramm (Ed.), *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955).
6. E. Allardt, *Yhteiskunnan rakenne ja sosiaalinen paine* (The Structure of Society and Social Pressure) (Porvoo: WSOY, 1964), pp. 91—96.
7. Cf. e.g. Allardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 77—78 or D. G. Dean, "Alienation: its Meaning and Measurement", *American Sociological Review*, 26, 1961, pp. 753—758.
8. M. Seeman, "On the Meaning of Alienation", *American Sociological Review*, 24, 1959, pp. 783—791.
9. L. Srole, "Social Integration and Certain Corollaries: An Exploratory Study", *American Sociological Review*, 21, 1956, pp. 709—716; cf. also Allardt, *op. cit.*
10. Dean, *op. cit.*
11. Allardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 71—73 and 81.
12. Dean, *op. cit.*, p. 754.
13. E. Kris and N. Leites, "Trends in 20th Century Propaganda", in B. Berelson and M. Janowitz (Eds.), *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1950).
14. *Ibid.*, p. 283. Italics are author's.
15. E. Fromm, *Vaarallinen vapaus* (Escape from Freedom) (Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä, 1962).

16. H. Cantril, H. Gaudet and H. Hertzog, *The Invasion from Mars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).
17. *Ibid.*, p. 158. Italics are added.
18. E.g. E. Maccoby, "Why Do Children Watch Television?", *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 18, 1954, pp. 239—244; L. I. Pearlin, "Social and Personal Stress and Escape Television Viewing", *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 23, 1959, 255—259; Riley and Riley, *op. cit.*
19. About the orientation of the media see e.g. Schramm, Lyle and Parker, *op. cit.*
20. Riley and Riley, *op. cit.*
21. McLeod, Ward and Tancill, *op. cit.*
22. Cf. e.g. P. Hemanus, *Helsingin sanomalehtien rikosaineisto* (The Crime Content in the Newspapers of Helsinki) (Tampere: Tampereen Yliopisto, 1966) or V. Pietilä, "Immediate vs. Delayed Reward in Newspaper Reading" *Acta Sociologica*, 12, 1969, pp. 199—208.
23. Allardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 171—173.
24. The material of the 1965 basic study of The Finnish Broadcasting Company was collected by personal interviews in November 1965 in 17 towns and rural communities in different parts of Finland. A total of 1704 interviews were conducted.
25. These data were collected by mailed questionnaires in connection with a readership study of a local newspaper, *Kymen Sanomat*, published in Hamina, a town in the south-eastern coast of Finland. 300 persons returned the questionnaire.
26. Pietilä, *op. cit.*
27. Cf. Allardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 81—85 or C. J. Browning, M. F. Farmer, H. D. Kirk and G. D. Mitchell, "On the Meaning of Alienation", *American Sociological Review*, 26, 1961, pp. 780—781.
28. Allardt, *op. cit.*
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 81—85.
30. About the ritualistic behavior see e.g. Allardt and Littunen, *op. cit.*, pp. 337—339 or R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957).
31. V. Pietilä, *Yksilö ja joukkotiedotuksen häiriötilat* (Individual and the Disturbances in Mass Communication), Tampereen Yliopiston Tutkimuslaitoksen monistesarja, 48, 1968. There were 122 respondents in the TV strike study and 119 in the newspaper strike study.
32. Allardt, *op. cit.*, p. 85.